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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

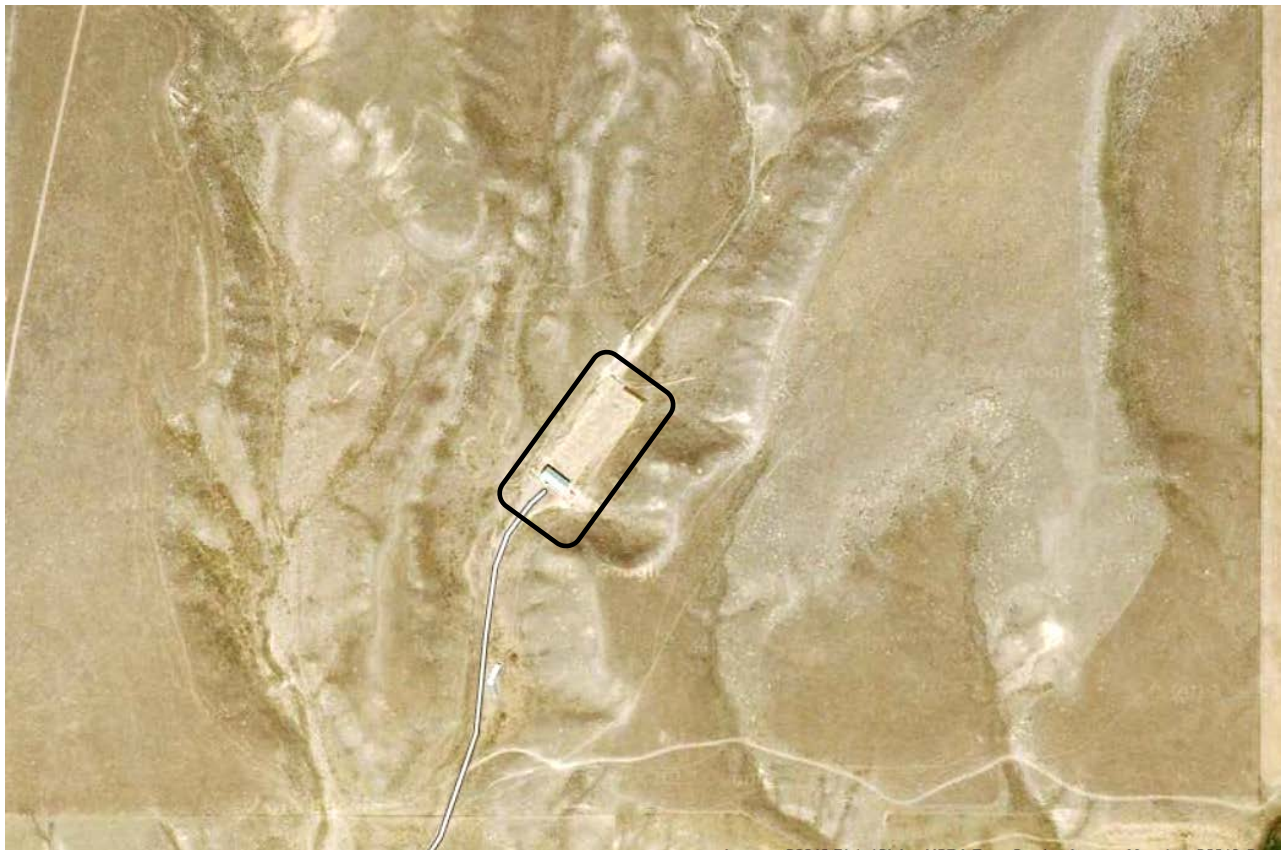
PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Meagher County Sportsmen's Association Range

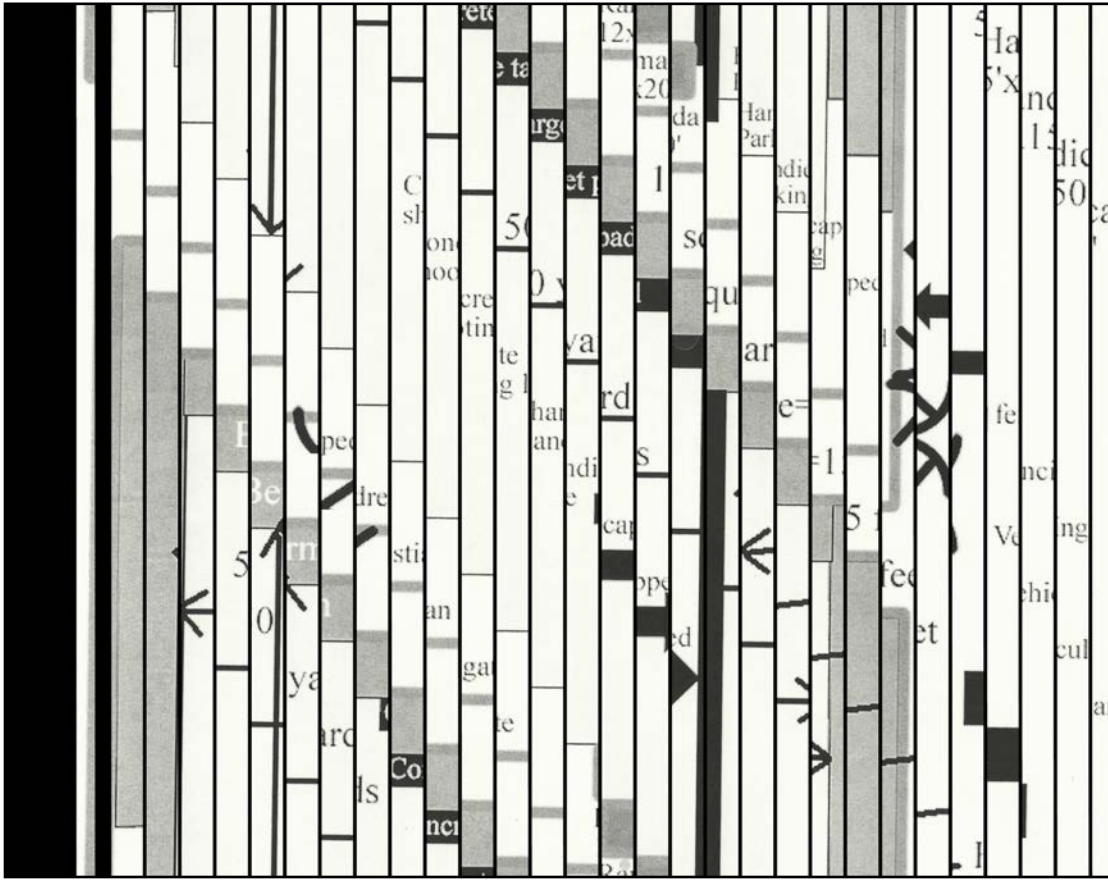
2. Type of Proposed Action:
Construction of a pistol range.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Meagher County Sportsmen's Range is located on 66 acres 1.5 mile north of White Sulphur Springs, Montana at Jackson Road, White Sulphur Springs, Montana 59645, Lat. 46.566473, Long. -110.905316.



Map 1 – Aerial View of Meagher County Sportsmen's Range, White Sulphur Springs, Montana.



Map 2 - Proposed Pistol Range for the Meagher County Sportsmen's Range

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

- (a)(i) Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*
- (ii) May not limit the number of members;*
- (iii) may charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*
- (iv) shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*
- (b) Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

5. Need for the Action(s):

Currently, there is no pistol range in Meagher County. Meagher County Sportsmen's Association members, as well as local law enforcement and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) Region 4 personnel, have expressed the need for adding a pistol range to the Meagher County Sportsmen's Association Range, which is the only shooting range in Meagher County.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

Provide a pistol range to be used by club members as well as local law enforcement, FWP, and the public for personal protection classes, firearms training, and competitive shooting events.

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

The proposed pistol range would cover approximately 1 acre of the 66-acre Meagher County Sportsmen's Association range.

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The property is located on 66 acres of privately owned land. The Meagher County Sportsmen's Association entered into a 20-year lease agreement with the Jackson Ranch in 2007. The property is not located within or adjacent to a floodplain and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property, with the nearest permanent water located approximately .75 miles from the range. All water on the range is seasonal and is directed away from the property via natural water channels. The range offers opportunities for several shooting sports, including rifle, pistol, black powder, shotgun, and archery.

9. Description of Project:

The grant will fund the construction of the range itself. The leveling of the area, construction of the berms and a base floor for the range, installation of a short road, and installation of drainage with culvert will cost approximately \$9200. Installation of a 5-strand fence surrounding the range will cost approximately \$2180. Installation of a concrete target line and handicapped access position and floor for Ramada will cost approximately \$2185. The purchase of 2 remote-controlled two-target turning targets will cost approximately \$3000. A small Ramada with tables for temporary storage and maintenance will cost approximately \$485.

10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

None

Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
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N/A

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$18,058
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11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:

The Meagher County Sportsmen's Association Range is located on 66 acres of exclusively private land leased to the Meagher County Sportsmen's Association. This is a private range with a membership fee, though visitors are welcome and are charged \$10 per day. Other organizations that have used the range and events that have been hosted at the range in the past include: Meagher County Sheriff's Office; Montana FWP Region 4; Hunter and Bow Safety Classes; MCSA Junior Rifle Program; and the 4H Shooting Program. All of these events and organizations used the facilities free of charge.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:

Because the Meagher County Sportsmen's Association Range is a private range for members, there has been no public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range improvement proposals have been discussed with the club members and the associated project vendors and contractors.

13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Pat McCoy; 34 Bingham Lane; White Sulphur Springs; MT 59645; (406) 547-2437.

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The Meagher County Sportsmen's Association is a nonprofit private shooting club. The range provides the only shooting facilities in 42 miles of the property, with the closest near Townsend, Montana.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: April 11, 2013.

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A, the Proposed Alternative, and Alternative B, the No Action Alternative, were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project): to construct a pistol range. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The no action alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

None. Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations): None

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		#4
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		#7
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		#8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		#9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may leave the immediate area during road re-surfacing activity.

4. The elimination of vegetation for the implementation of the proposed project will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area. The proposed project occupies a small portion of the property. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has been disturbed in the area of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project will have a minor impact on native vegetation in the area.

7. The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils but these improvements and construction will not substantially effect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil

disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and disturbed area will be reseeded.

8. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during construction of the pistol range and access road. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population in the surrounding area.

9. This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not apply.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		#4
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		#7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

4. The site is adjacent to surrounding agricultural land used for grazing and hay production.

7. The construction of a pistol range will improve the quality of the shooting sports within the community.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative.

The Meagher County Sportsmen's Association's Proposed Alternative, to provide a safe, regulated shooting opportunity, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

- Pat McCoy; 34 Bingham Lane; White Sulphur Springs; MT 59645; (406) 547-2437.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

ANDREA DARLING

Darling Natural Resource Consulting

Montana City, MT 59634

Date Completed: July 15, 2013

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Meagher County News, White Sulphur Springs, MT* announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.